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New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter

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Immigration Conference Reviews Church Efforts

On an unusually warm November 12 the Commission's annual conference met at Plainsboro in the beautiful Gothic complex once the home of St. Joseph's College, the Vincentian prep seminary, and now a retreat and conference center. The placid pastoral setting, in which one could watch Princeton University's sculls practicing on Lake Carnegie, contrasted sharply with the crowded urban scene which was the focus of most of the discussions at the sessions inside.

After a brief welcome by Bishop Dominic A. Marconi, D.D. chairman of the Commission, and a sketch of what the Commission is and does by Joseph F. Mahoney, Professor Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens of Union Theological Seminary outlined the development of Caribbean migration to the area and specific steps taken by the Catholic Church to serve the immigrants. She noted that the United



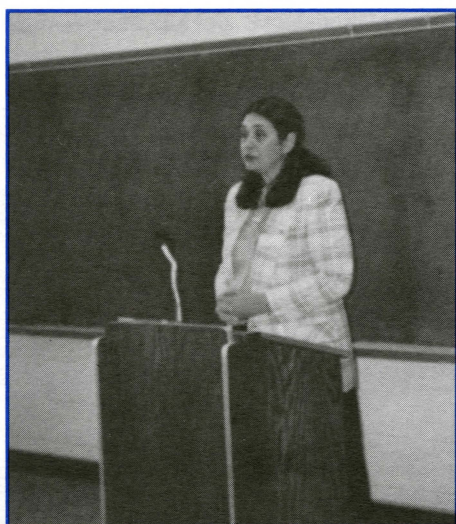
Participants in the Caribbean immigration conference pose for a concluding picture. Left to right are Professor Yolanda Prieto, Bishop Dominic A. Marconi, Professor Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, Monsignor William J. Reilly, Maricela Quintana de Vega and Monsignor William E. Puma.

States now has the fifth largest Spanish-speaking population of all the world's countries, and that New Jersey, along with the rest of the northeast, has the widest variety of Hispanic backgrounds.

Puerto Ricans have been coming to the state since the 1920s, but not until the 1940s did large numbers of them appear. At first they came as migrant workers harvesting crops in South Jersey, and then gradually began moving into the cities on a permanent basis. By the 1950s each diocese had a substantial Puerto Rican population. With the advent of Fidel Castro in Cuba large numbers of Cubans migrated to this area, and subsequent economic problems in the Caribbean led thousands of Dominicans and others to New Jersey. Additionally, both poverty and politics led many French-speaking Haitians to migrate hither.

Beginning in the 1940s the dioceses began to assign clergy and facilities to serve the rapidly growing Hispanic communities. To learn the language and culture of the newcomers, priests were sent to Puerto Rico and elsewhere for short periods to become familiar with the background and expectations of their new parishioners. Besides providing Mass and the Sacraments, the Church mediated with social service agencies and provided a social center and social programs for the newcomers.

All was not smooth. Those raised in the United States had different practices and expectations from those raised in the Caribbean and the culture clash resulted in problems in the Church as well as in the larger society. Catholic practice in Puerto Rico, for example, was less clergy-
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Professor Prieto describes developments at St. Augustine's, Union City.

Immigration Conference Reviews Church Efforts

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centered and more family-centered, and misunderstandings and explosions could easily result from well-intentioned policies or actions which failed to consider the culture of the newcomers.

Professor Yolanda Prieto of Ramapo College examined the development of one parish in the wake of the Caribbean migration since World War II. St. Augustine's Church in Union City was home to a congregation principally derived from German, Italian and Polish background when, in 1960, heavy Cuban migration began to enter the city. Unlike the streams of immigrants from other areas of the Caribbean, the Cuban migration contained many professional people. By 1980, 38 percent of Union City's population was of Cuban background, the heaviest concentration in the United States outside Miami. As the earlier population moved to the suburbs, Cubans came to dominate St. Augustine's.

Then, in the 1980s, as the children of Cuban immigrants themselves trekked to the suburbs, newcomers from Central and South America began to enter the city and parish in increasing numbers. The Cubans who remained provided most of the leadership in parish organizations, but the second generation began to reach beyond

Recent Publications of Interest

Opportunity Realized: The Greek Catholic Union's First One Hundred Years, 1892-1992 is a narrative history of this central organization of Rusin peoples whose major migration to this country began around 1870. Coming from the sub-Carpathian areas of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were in religion Greek Catholic or Greek Orthodox. This study of the Greek Catholic Union is lavishly illustrated and contains an excellent bibliography. The book is available from the Greek Catholic Union of USA, 5400 Tuscarawas Road, Beaver, Pennsylvania 15009-9513.

Ruth Paci's, *Down by the River and Under the Cliff: The Story of the Church of the Holy Rosary and Its Parishioners* covers the history of Catholicism in the Edgewater area from the 1850s to 1992. The book contains 136 pages and sells for \$19.95. The publication is available from Holy Rosary Press, 365 Undercliff Avenue, Edgewater, New Jersey 07020.

their own particular Hispanic consciousness to develop a more generalized Latino consciousness.

A few statistics are illuminating here: in 1978 St. Augustine's population was roughly 20 percent native-born and 80 percent Hispanic, and of the latter three-quarters were Cuban, the balance a mix of several backgrounds. By 1994 the parish retained an old immigrant background of only 7 percent and 93 percent were Latino. Of these, 35 percent were Cuban, 40 percent Colombian, and the remaining 18 percent from other areas of Latin America — Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and elsewhere.

When the sessions resumed after lunch, Monsignor Vincent E. Puma of the Diocese of Paterson reflected on his many years working with the Latino

community, starting with Sunday visits to migrant worker communities in the rural areas of the state as far south as Glassboro, and recounting several incidents of both success and failure in the efforts of natives and immigrants to understand and accommodate each other. Monsignor William J. Reilly of the Archdiocese of Newark focused his remarks on the pastoral plan of the archdiocese for meeting the needs of its Hispanic population, and Maricela Quintana de Vega described the way in which her parish fleshed out the general plan to meet their particular needs, and the difficulties faced in doing so.

Although attendance was disappointing, the value and interest of the conference was demonstrated by the vigorous question periods which followed the presentations.



Professors Yolanda Prieto, left, and Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens interrupt a conversation for a photo opportunity.



Professor Diaz-Stevens makes a point in response to a question after her presentation.

Neglected Historical Riches — Cemetery Inscriptions

by Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B.

Cemeteries, while not usually thought of as sources for history, do in fact contain quite a lot of information useful to the historian and the genealogist. Genealogists have long made great use of this resource, but historians have been less assiduous in pursuing the data available on gravestones. Unlike headstones today, which usually give only the names of the people buried in the plot, along with their dates of birth and death, older gravestones often give a much fuller picture of the person buried beneath, the data recorded being determined in part by the life-stories of the deceased and in part by ethnic custom.

Among the Irish, for example, it was fairly common to note the place of birth in Ireland. The headstone for Thomas Powers and his wife Catherine, in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Newark, to cite one instance, mentions that they were both natives of New Castle, County Tipperary, Ireland. According to headstones in Saint John's Cemetery, Orange, Michael Dempsey, who died on October 30, 1869 at the age of 83, was born in Loughrea, County Galway, while Andrew Quealy, who died at the age of 37 on July 22, 1870, was born in Stradbally, County Waterford. Sometimes even the townland is mentioned, making it easy to locate baptismal records. According to his headstone in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, East Orange, Michael Walsh, who died on February 5, 1900 at the age of 30 was a native of Ballybunnion, Parish of Doon, Co. Kerry, Ireland.

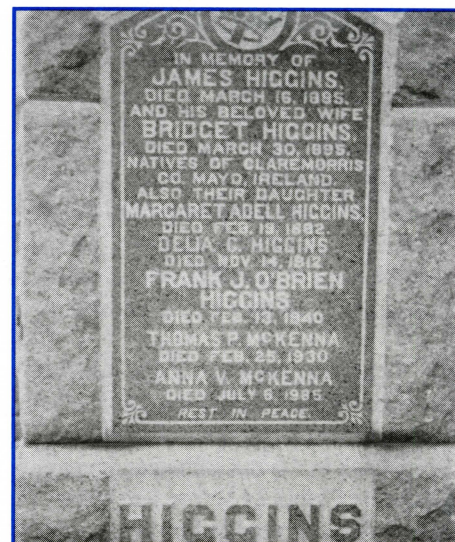
Often, a wife's maiden name will be given, as happens on the stone of Catherine Mooney, wife of Morgan Kelly, also in Mount Olivet Cemetery, or on the stone of Catherine McCluskey, wife of John Hand, who is buried in Saint Vincent's Cemetery, Chatham.

Sometimes there is information that hints at an interesting story, as on the stone of Edward O'Kelly, also in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery: "Erected by the Wolfe Tone Club of Newark, New

Jersey, to the memory of Edward O'Kelly, a martyr to the cause of liberty, 1845-1879." The date of death indicates that he probably died as a result of his role in the Land League, but this would have to be checked; his obituary in the newspaper would probably provide the answer.

While the headstones of the Irish often indicate the place of birth, this is rarely the case with headstones placed over the graves of Italians. On the other hand, these often have an inlaid photograph of the deceased. In Saint Peter's Cemetery, Belleville, Salvatore Ferrentino (1889-1936) stares out from his headstone in his Sunday best, while Lucia P. Campi's (1865-1925) photograph adorns her stone in Saint John's Cemetery, Orange.

Headstones can also remind us how fragile the life of the very young was in the last century, and how exhausting the toll on their mothers. Who would not be moved by the stone in Saint Peter's Cemetery, Belleville, that marks the "Burying Place of Joshua and Margaret Fearn" and lists the information on their deceased children: Charles, April 4 to July 15, 1868; William, September 8, 1870 to September 16, 1871; Mary Ann, February 19, 1872 to September 16, 1873; and Thomas, April 29, 1869 to July 13, 1873. The footstone for M.



Family tombstone in St. John's Cemetery, Orange, illustrating some characteristics of Irish-American gravestones

Josephine Fitzpatrick in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Newark, tells us that her last words were "O Mamma."

Some of the most enlightening headstones mark the last resting-place of veterans. Military headstones, recognizable from their uniform appearance, record the regiment or company in which the veteran served, and sometimes more. The gravestone of Lieutenant Terence Murphy, in Saint John's Cemetery, Orange, was apparently paid for by the people of Orange, as far as can be gathered from the almost-eroded inscription which covers two sides of the substantial stone. Around the sides are inscribed the names of the battles in

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A view of St. John's Cemetery, Orange

Neglected Historical Riches— Cemetery Inscriptions

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which he fought: Bristow, Fair Oaks, Glendale and Malvern Hill, all part of McClellan's 1862 campaign and fought in the spring and early summer. Murphy died on August 27, 1862, so this native of Armagh very likely died of wounds.

There were numerous Catholics in New Jersey long before the first Catholic cemetery was established at New Brunswick in the mid-nineteenth century. Deceased Catholics before that were buried either in private family cemeteries or in the cemeteries of other denominations. The latter should not be overlooked by those searching out the early history of Catholics in New Jersey. Francis Furgler, a German Catholic who lived for a number of years as a hermit in Mount Holly, was buried in the Quaker cemetery when he died in 1778. And

Flynn notes in his *Catholic Church in New Jersey* that, when St. Peter's Church in New Brunswick was built "many of the remains of persons buried in the Episcopal cemetery were transferred to the plot purchased by the Catholics." Presumably the good monsignor meant the remains of deceased Catholics. Burial in private family cemeteries was not uncommon in a nation with much more land than people. The Ruppells of Hunterdon County, who were already there in 1766 when Ann Maria Ruppell was baptized, apparently had their own family cemetery, which was blessed by Bishop John Neumann (now St. John Neumann) in the 1840s.

Many of the early Catholic cemeteries are no longer in existence, and we have lost whatever information may have been on the headstones. In some cases, however, the inscriptions were copied before the cemetery was abandoned, as happened in the case of the old Catholic cemetery in New Brunswick, where the

earliest burial was of Elizabeth McLaughlin, who died on November 9, 1813. The Sisters of Sacred Heart Convent copied the inscriptions on the gravestones before their destruction. Because of this, we can still learn that Mary Bergin, who died September 13, 1862 at the age of 28, was born in the parish of Crane, County Kilkenny, Ireland, and that Michael Scully, who died at the age of 61 on February 11, 1861, was a native of the Barony of Tenneuninch, Parish of Rearymore, Townland of Cloonach, Queens County, Ireland.

Unfortunately, such care to preserve the records was not taken in most cases. The growth of the city of Newark pressed so closely on the cemetery which originally surrounded Saint John's Church on Mulberry Street that sometime in the 19th century the graveyard had to be abandoned and the remains were re-interred in a new cemetery behind Saint Michael's Church on Broadway. In time this, too, had to be abandoned and the graves were in turn removed to Holy Cross Cemetery, North Arlington in 1960.

While the nearly 70 volumes of the *Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey* contain transcriptions from hundreds of cemeteries, as far as I can tell only one Catholic cemetery is included, St. Mary of the Assumption in Mullica Township, which dates from 1827. There is a lot of history to be found in Catholic cemeteries, history that is quickly eroding away.

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